From: Rick Richardson
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/23/02 1:46pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

The current proposed Microsoft settlement is a bad idea, and flawed in many areas. It does not punish Microsoft, and it does not equalize the marketplace by providing all independant software developers access to the documentation and source code for Microsoft file formats and operating systems.

Instead, I urge you to accept the "Red Hat Proposal to Enhance Microsoft Settlement Offer By Providing Open Source Software to All U.S. School Districts".

      http://www.redhat.com/about/presscenter/2001/press_usschools.html

I believe this proposal will effect a real punishment to the Microsoft Corporation, a punishment that is sorely missing from the current settlement agreement.

In addition, this settlement proposal will have a real benefit to school districts across the nation, who will be able to focus their limited resources on computer hardware purchases.

Microsoft's current settlement proposal is completely flawed. For Microsoft it is not a donation at all. Once they've written the software, each particular copy only costs them the price of a CD - a mass-produced one at that, probably $0.50. By making more copies of MS-Windows to give away, they essentially print money: money in the form of a tax writeoff. Each copy of MS-Windows donated to a charity gets Microsoft a $300 tax writeoff (charitable donation) for a 50-cent disk, and serves to expand the Microsoft platform dominance.

Giving away Windows is win-win-win for Microsoft. Just be aware: using their pricing for copies of Windows distributed as part of the settlement inflates the actual value of that settlement by a factor of about 500, and helps to perpetuate their monopoly.

If you cannot bring yourself to accept RedHat's proposal as is, then consider an alternative: let Microsoft donate $1.1 billion worth of software to the school systems. But demand that it be their competitor's software (preferrably Linux and other commercially-available Open-Source software). For example, let Microsoft donate approximately 10,000-20,000 boxed sets of either RedHat, Mandrake, Suse, etc, for the existing PCs in the schools. This will put significant cash flow in the high-tech industry, help further their competitors, and actually punish Microsoft.

-Rick Richardson

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Rick Richardson rickr@mn.rr.com   http://home.mn.rr.com/richardsons/